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ABSTRACT

In this project, problem students from grades 9 through 12 attending the only high school in a small West Tennessee town were placed in a small group counseling situation consisting of a mixture of blacks and whites, males and females, from low and middle socioeconomic levels. Counselors and consultants serving as group facilitators included both black and white male and female leaders. This design provided opportunities to address issues of school functioning and to enhance individual development in terms of mutual respect and acceptance. Students were selected who had chronic problems with poor academic performance and repeated demonstrations of antisocial behavior within the school environment. Once per month this group was led by a professor of counseling psychology. The group met other weeks during each month with the school counselor who was also available for individual counseling. Meetings of the group were conducted in an open manner conducive to freedom of expression. Leaders demonstrated their commitment to the psychological principle of modeling by their words, body language, and voice tone. Counseling strategies of enactment and rehearsal of everyday problems were primary treatment interventions. It is believed that this format is a realistic approach, enabling the school counselor to have a consultation experience of "learning by doing," and at the same time facilitating possible therapeutic change in a human potential group. Measures are being taken to quantify the effects of the group counseling. (ABL)

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AGENDA

HUMAN POTENTIAL GROUPS: HIGH RISK HIGH SCHOOLERS MODEL
AND REHEARSE FOR SUCCESS

Chairperson: Burl E. Gilliland, Memphis State University

Presenters: Jacque Boehler, Milan, TN Special School District

Josie Anderson, Milan, TN Special School District

Rose Johnston, Memphis State University

Introduction and Overview of the Program: Burl Gilliland.

Background and Purpose of the Program: Jacque Boehler.

Selection of Subjects, Eligibility, Release Forms, Physical
Facilities, Scheduling, Securing the Support and Cooperation
of Faculty and Administration, Ensuring Confidentiality, and
Providing for Continuity Between Sessions: Josie Anderson.Explanation of Theoretical Rationale and Therapeutic Strategies
Employed with the Group: Rose Johnston.

Summary, Conclusions, Questions, and Answers: Burl Gilliland.

NOTES: 1. Selected Videotaped Segments Shown to Illustrate Tech-
niques Used;

2. Brief Handout Distributed.

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HUMAN POTENTIAL GROUPS: HIGH RISK HIGH SCHOOLERS MODEL

AND REHEARSE FOR SUCCESS

By Rose Johnston and Burl Gilliland, Memphis State University

and Jacque Boehler and Josie Anderson, Milan, Tennessee

Special School District

Presented April 23, 1987, AACD Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana

Introduction

This project addresses two important areas of concern for professionals providing consultation and counseling services in school settings. The first is the problem of adolescent poor academic performance and disruptive behavior in a public school setting. The second is the problem of effective provision of consultation services to the school counselors in an applied and participatory mode. In other words, instead of the consultants "telling" the counselors how to work with student problems, the consultants and counselors work side-by-side in live, on-going group sessions with the students. In this format issues of counseling and consultation are addressed jointly.

Consultation/Counseling Model

In this project problem students from grades 9 through 12 are placed in a small group counseling situation consisting of a mixture of blacks and whites, males and females, from low and middle socio-economic levels. Counselors and consultants who serve as group facilitators comprise both male and female and black and white adult leaders. This design provides opportunities to address issues of school functioning, and, at the same time, to enhance individual development in terms of mutual respect and

acceptance. Students are in a milieu which fosters the growth and perhaps reformulation of value systems concerning the world beyond the school grounds. In other words, the essence of this program is to foster the optimum human potential of each individual involved in the program.

Insofar as it is possible in the institutional setting of a public high school, an atmosphere is created where respect, genuineness, and empathy is demonstrated by the group leaders. Three to four adult facilitators regularly lead this group; this ensures that the usual group norm of antisocial and maladaptive behavior cannot prevail. Leader modeling, enactment, and rehearsal are strategies which encourage development of student interest and willingness to attempt their own modeling, enactment, and rehearsal (Bandura, 1976; Cormier & Cormier, 1985). Primary goals are to enhance self-acceptance and self-concept of the students. Other objectives are to facilitate assertiveness, to sharpen observation skills, to enhance awareness of feelings, emotions and attitudes, and to foster decision making abilities concerning realistic academic goals and social behaviors.

Subjects

Subjects are drawn from the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade population of 650 students in the only high school of a small West Tennessee town. Selection of students for this group counseling study is based on chronic problems with poor academic performance and repeated demonstrations of antisocial behavior within the school environment. Some of the identified problem behaviors are poor motivation, low grades, excessive absenteeism, destruction of property, fighting, threatening other

students, lying, and stealing. Most of the group members have frequently demonstrated negative acting out behaviors in the community as well as on the school grounds and have boasted about their reputations of being "problems." Designation of students is determined by teachers, counselors, school administrators, and parental referrals; final decisions are based on counselor judgment of greatest need plus the consent of parents or guardians. A written release form is obtained from each group member's parent or guardian.

Although the group's population is racially, socioeconomically, and sexually mixed, there are several shared commonalities. These include broken parental relationships, unstable and inconsistent authority figures in the home, and emotionally deprived early childhood environments.

Meetings

Once per month this group is led by a professor of counseling psychology from a university located two hours' driving distance from the school. His contract is to provide counseling/consultation services one day per month on school grounds; he also makes himself available for telephone consultation on an as needed basis. Typically he is assisted by one or more pre-doctoral level students.

The group meets other weeks during each month with the school counselor. She is available for individual counseling as requested by students or as deemed desirable by the counselor.

Procedure

The design of this group counseling project has been devel-

oped in collaboration between the consultants and the school counselors. All group sessions take place in the school environs in a regularly used room where privacy is assured and where there are no interruptions. Some sessions are recorded on sound or video tape with the consent of each group member. It appears that the use of video tape particularly heightens student motivation for successful solving of group identified problems. The content of these sessions is summarized by the consultants in a written journal approach utilizing an anecdotal method for purposes of recording important behavioral, attitudinal, and emotional expressions while preserving confidentiality (Progoff, 1977).

All meetings of this group are conducted in an open manner that is conducive to freedom of expression. Guidelines of confidentiality, straightforwardness of communication, respect for others in the group, and lack of physical violence or destruction are mutually developed and adhered to. When a violation of this has occurred, the offending member was removed for the remainder of that session. This has happened once. The leaders, through their words, body language, and voice tone strive to develop an atmosphere of acceptance, genuineness, empathy, and caring so that each individual has an experience of being valued and taken seriously. The leaders thus demonstrate their commitment to the psychological principle that modeling, or observational learning, is a powerful and persuasive strategy for acquiring new modes of behavior or of modifying preexisting behavioral patterns (Bandura, 1969. 1977; Meichenbaum, 1983; Cormier & Cormier, 1985). The goal is that each student experiences within the group context increased awareness of his or her feelings and attitudes, and

develops enhanced abilities to make autonomous decisions concerning academic performance and social behaviors.

Format

In order to provide structure for beginning interpersonal interactions, and at the consensus of group members, the first two meetings were devoted to learning and playing the game "Body Talk" (developed by Dynamic Design, Inc., 1970). By identification and nonverbal interpretation of 13 emotions (such as anger, sadness, and fear), all participants learned common nonverbal communication skills. They also increased abilities for awareness of body language, attention to feelings, and willingness to role play. This was followed by verbal discussions concerning the activities. By the third session, the group spontaneously addressed a problem that emerged from within the group, and this format has continued with no more interest in playing "Body Talk." Later problems that have been chosen for attention derive from two sources: (1) student initiation of a difficulty of general interest, or (2) school counselor identification of problems involving student conflicts with other students, teachers, school administration, parents, or the community at large.

Counseling strategies of enactment and rehearsal are the primary treatment interventions. For example, following the initial verbal exploration during which a problem is clarified and concretely specified, the consultants suggest that they act out the roles of the individuals involved in the conflict. This acting out is usually initiated by one consultant at a time which is done with behaviors portrayed in an exaggerated form. This

technique further implements understanding of the "problem," and the use of humorous interpretation by the leader-actor encourages group involvement and future risk taking. Laughter is seen as a valuable aid in creating a non-threatening atmosphere; in no way is humor used to demean or discount an individual.

Following the initial enactment, there is critique by the group and suggestions of more correct portrayals. There are further demonstrations of the problem by the consultants who then engage the assistance and participation of other group members, including the individual or individuals identified as having the problem. After this variety of enactments, which includes switching of parts among the participants, there is a discussion of consequences, feelings, and choices regarding future similar situations. Decisions are made concerning "new" behaviors that seem more efficacious. Then, there are dramatized rehearsals. These activities are shared by all participants in the group, with coaching, confrontation, and often joking. Demonstrations of enacted preferred behaviors are verbally reinforced by the leaders and there is frequent commitment from targeted participants to report back to the group of their experiences in utilizing these new behaviors outside of the group environment.

Following summarizing and sharing of feedback which marks the close of each group session, the consultants and counselors meet together. This is an essential strategy for during this "time out to think," there is opportunity for the consultants and school counselors to assess and integrate the group experience. Focus is on the problems as perceived by the school counselors, on the strategies utilized during the session, and on development

of possible interventions for future meetings.

Therapeutic Strategies

The therapeutic strategies are drawn from a combination of theoretical models including person-centered, Gestalt, rational-emotive, and cognitive-behavioral. The primary applied focus is from a cognitive perspective which is best exemplified through Martin's (1987) cognitive-mediational models for facilitating client change which he summarized in Table 1 (p. 200).

TABLE 1

Basic Therapeutic Elements and Frequently Associated
Strategies or Methods and Effects

Basic Therapeutic Elements	Examples of Frequently Associated Therapist Strategies or Methods	Effects Vis-a-vis Client Change
Relating and setting goals	Basic interviewing skills, active listening and empathy, structuring and clarifying process and goals	Orientation to therapy, development of trust and rapport, Initial development of a dynamic processing capability
Preassessing	Probing strategies, set induction methods, role plays, in vivo demonstrations, Gestalt dialogues, "think aloud and thought-listing" methods, administration of psychological tests	Development of elaborated problem schemas, insight and understanding
Acquiring information	Bibliotherapy, direct instruction, clarifying discussion, experiential learning activities	Acquisition of task-relevant problem-solving structures, insight and understanding
Personalizing	Awareness-enhancing exercises (e.g. Gestalt methods), self-monitoring, analysis of belief	Development of empowered self-schemas, integration of self- and problem schemas,

	systems, homework assignments	motivation
Setting objectives and plans	Problem clarification, joint planning, making commitments, arranging contingencies	Refining of processing skills, integration of relevant structures and processes, formulation of action plans
Acting	Implementation and execution of intervention strategies, monitoring of therapeutic process and client growth and change, provision of support, encouragement, and challenge	Integration and refinement of relevant structures and processes through action and experience of consequences
Evaluating and assisting transfer	Summarizing, evaluation, planning for transfer, arranging follow-up procedures, termination work	Consolidation and generalization of client change, further integration of relevant cognitive structures and processes, internalization of therapeutic process

Although Martin's (1987) studies were done with individual clients, all of the descriptions in the present study were taken from counseling sessions within a group setting. A combination of the strategies found in Table 1 are utilized in each group session.

Results and Conclusions

The main concern of the counseling group is on solving everyday problems that affect school performance and personal lives. In a small group, structured counseling experience where individual differences are expected and autonomy is valued, interpersonal interaction can be experienced as nonthreatening. This can result in increased awareness of patterns of behavior that may be self-defeating, and an atmosphere created that is condu-

cive to trying out new, more adaptive behaviors. There appears to be substantial potential for success in this environment. In this way it is possible to encourage increased self-esteem along with enhanced valuing of others. This development of abilities for cooperative interaction occurs in parallel fashion to the shared, stated goals of the group, that of improvement of academic performance and social behaviors. It is believed that this format is a realistic approach for the school counselor to have a consultation experience of "learning by doing," at the same time facilitating possible therapeutic change in a human potential group.

Examples of problems, skills, and interests confronted by the group are:

1. To improve control of temper
2. To finish homework, and finish it on time
3. To resolve conflicts without getting into trouble
4. To practice taking care of own "rights"
5. To learn to speak directly and to not blame others.

Some of the measures being taken to attempt to quantify the effects of the group work with students are pre and post GPA's, school attendance, disciplinary actions, referrals to the counselor by teachers, and self report data. Anecdotal statements are recorded from students. One such statement, at the end of the last school year is worthy of repeating: "I've found that some people are hard to help, and I've been hard to help. But I've found that to be able to help yourself, you've got to be able to help others. I certainly want to be in the group another year."

Suggested Readings

The following list of readings have been compiled as sources of information for those individuals who wish to pursue the kinds of counseling/consultation described in this paper.

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